

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL
APPROVING IN PART, DISSENTING IN PART**

Re: *2018 Quadrennial Regulatory Review – Review of the Commission’s Broadcast Ownership Rules and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996* (MB Docket No. 18-349)

There was a time when we waited in the morning for the news to hit the front stoop in print and on paper. Then we gathered at night to bask in the glow of a single television screen for the evening news. Gone are the days. The world has changed. Not one of us expects our news and information to be available in such a limited way. Every one of us now looks for content at any time, in any place, and on any screen handy.

This is exciting. But let’s be honest, it’s also challenging. The economic models that sustained traditional newsgathering have been forever changed by digitization—and while new platforms are multiplying, what is viral is not always verifiable. The questions that result are undeniably complicated. How do we advance journalism when algorithms are ascendant? How do we advance trust in real facts instead of dismissing them as fake news? How do we foster a marketplace where there is competition for ideas so that we have the information we all need to make decisions about our lives, our communities, and our country?

There are no simple answers. But I think there are principles from the past that can guide us in the future. For decades, the FCC has built its media policies around the simple idea that localism, competition, and diversity matter. These values have their origin in the Communications Act. They may not be trendy, but they have stood the test of time. They continue to support journalism and jobs. I think it is essential that these principles lead this agency as it determines what comes next. Let me explain why.

Localism matters. Local broadcasting remains the most trusted source of news. When the unthinkable occurs, it is also the preferred source for local emergency information. But this month the University of North Carolina School of Media and Journalism released a study detailing the stark decline of local news in rural areas. Newspapers have collapsed, and stations are increasingly owned by national companies with limited ties to the communities they serve. What is emerging are news deserts—areas of the country where national news dominates but local news is disappearing.

Competition matters. It is axiomatic that more owners in more markets can mean more ideas. It can mean more news. The converse is also true. Too much consolidation can reduce the number of voices, jobs, and the newsgathering that results.

And finally, diversity matters. What we see and hear over the air says so much about who we are as individuals, as communities, and as a nation. For too long, women and minorities have struggled to take the reins at media outlets nationwide. Progress in diversity is slow. But study a bit of history and you can only come to one conclusion—excessive consolidation is unlikely to increase diversity and more likely to make the ownership of outlets look less like the communities they serve.

Once again—localism, competition, and diversity. These are the guiding principles I believe this agency should use in its Quadrennial Review of media ownership rules. I believe it is possible to use these guideposts to develop thoughtful reform.

In some ways, I believe today’s rulemaking meets this mark, including with its proposals to rethink limitations on the ownership of AM radio and the proposals to increase ownership diversity of broadcast entities deserve serious consideration.

However, in other aspects it falls short. We suggest eliminating the dual network rule, clearing the way for the merger of our four largest broadcast networks. We seek comment on a proposal allowing a single company to own an unlimited number of FM and AM radio stations in most communities in this country. That could mean one company controls every radio station in the town where you live. We also fail to acknowledge that many new media sources are dependent on broadband—and in too many communities in this country, especially in rural areas, high-speed service is too hard to find.

To the extent this rulemaking offers thoughtful reform, I approve. But in other aspects, I dissent. It fails to honestly assess the impact of too many changes we propose on the values of localism, competition, and diversity that have informed this agency's media policies in the past—and I believe should still inform our efforts in the future.